

Runaway 421

Chapter 421

Ricky appeared dumbfounded. "What banners?"

Irene kept a close eye on his reaction. "You really don't know?"

"Time out, Irene. What banners are you talking about? I really don't get what you're talking about."

Ricky still appeared to be dizzy from his hangover and he could not understand Irene just then.

Irene kept staring at him for seconds, ensuring that he was not playing dumb before saying, "Yesterday, someone hung banners over Central Tower, mocking Zachary and Ember..."

"Hahaha!!!" Ricky burst out in laughter right then. "He got what he deserved!"

"Was it you?" Irene asked seriously.

"Nope," Ricky said, his smile remaining on his face. "Guess I'm not the only one who hates him. It's what he deserves for being a piece of shit."

Irene pursed her lips, and actually began to doubt him. "It really wasn't you? It looks exactly like something you would do."

Ricky shrugged. "If you insist that it's me, then it must be me. I'm just glad he didn't get off easy."

"Don't do that ever again. You're just going to hurt Lulu—Zachary's family would be after her if they even think that it's her."

"He's been with me all this while, someone suddenly said. "He never did anything—don't blame him for something he didn't do."

Irene turned and saw that it was Lulu, who had woken up without Irene knowing and was getting up to her feet. "It's time we left."

Irene followed Lulu. "Are you alright?"

"I'm perfectly fine," Lulu said as she turned and looked Irene in the eye. "Also, Ricky and I came straight here after the wedding. He's been with me all this time—he wouldn't have time for anything else."

Irene was left puzzled. "Then who could it be?"

"Who cares? I'm just happy someone messed with Zachary," Ricky said as he went to the counter to pay

up.

As Irene and Lulu stepped out of the bar, Lulu stretched her back and said, "It's time I head home."

"Don't you want to take a bath first?" Irene asked. "I've taken the day off and we could go to Spencer Mansion together. I was just thinking about checking on Tommy too."

"I'm really such a mess, huh?" Lulu asked.

Irene nodded, and she mused to herself for a second. "Okay, sorry for causing you trouble."

"You don't have to be that polite with me." Irene smiled.

Ricky made his way toward them just then, and Irene said, "Let's go."

While Ricky tried to hail a taxi, however, a black luxury car suddenly stopped right in front of Lulu.

The window wound down, revealing Mrs. Slate's face.

She came from money, but the scars of age were obvious—things must be unpleasant between her and her family.

"Get in, Lulu Adams. I have questions for you," she growled.

"You can ask me right here," Lulu shot back.

Mrs. Slate studied her from head to toe, and then glanced behind her at the signboard that read Coco Bar.

Her lips curling in contempt, she said, "I guess Ember is definitely the right choice for Zachary. Not only did she come from the right family, but the fact that she has her act together makes her more deserving of my son. I wonder why I gave you a chance at all."

Lulu was not affected by Mrs. Slate's words, however—she had suffered worse insults before, and was basically used to it.

"Fine. We can talk here if you don't want to leave with me, so tell me: were you the one who hung those banners at Zachary's wedding?"

"It wasn't her."

Ricky walked up to them, answering Mrs. Slate before Lulu could.

"And who are you?" Mrs. Slate asked.

"I'm Lulu's friend. It's your own son's fault that he was ridiculed. You should instead head home and ask him what he had done to deserve that."

Ricky was too young to fear Mrs. Slate, let alone care who she was as he fired back..

Mrs. Slate stared at him for a while, and then turned to Lulu to ask, "Were you two together last night?"

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Ricky snorted. "We were. What's that to you?"

"Shut up," Irene snapped and promptly tugged at his sleeve—he was going to make Mrs. Slate misunderstand, especially when she clearly did not like Lulu.

His phrasing would just fuel Mrs. Slate's notion that Lulu had loose morals and hurt Lulu in turn.

Ricky, however, was not letting up. "I'm just telling the truth! What is there to hide?"

Mrs. Slate scoffed at Lulu then. "I knew it—what an unseemly woman you are. Well, this suits me just fine. Now that Zachary is married, there's nothing between you two, so don't bother him ever again. In turn, I won't press charges regarding the banners."

"Hey, are you even listening? I told you—it wasn't Lulu. She's been with me all this while, and I can testify for her!" Ricky snapped, indignant at how prejudiced was Mrs. Slate acting.

"You? Testify? You've been defending her all this while. The best you can manage is perjury," Mrs. Slate laughed coldly, before adding in disdain, "Truly... birds of the same feather flock together. Scum will always end up with scum."

"What was that?!" Ricky's temper flared, and he would already be hitting her if Irene was not holding him back.

At the same time, Lulu finally had enough.

She could take any insult from Mrs. Slate, but she was not about to hold back if she insulted her friend!

"I'm the one you're after. Scorn me all you want, but don't you insult my friends."

"What, did I get it wrong? Would you have spent the night in a bar with a man if you have any semblance of morals? Let me get this straight: stay away from Zachary. This is your last warning, and if you don't comply—"

"I'll stay away from him, you don't have to keep reminding me. But about the banners..."

She was going to say it was not her, but that was when she noticed Zachary and Ember nearby, and she quickly said, "It was me."

"Hmph. I knew it!" Mrs. Slate snorted, raising her brow. "You've made the Lindts very upset while embarrassing my family. I'll make you pay."

With that, she wound up the window and told her chauffeur to drive away.

Beside Lulu, Irene frowned.

"It wasn't you, why would you..." Her voice trailed off when she saw Zachary and Ember, and she suddenly knew that Lulu claimed that she hung those banners because she saw Zachary.

"What are they even doing here..." she muttered to herself.

On the other hand, Zachary walked straight to Lulu, holding her gaze as he said, "I knew it wasn't you."

Lulu smiled. "It was me."

Zachary frowned. "Why are you acting like this?*

"Because I hate you?"

Through it all, Ember was holding tightly onto Zachary's arm. Not keen for Zachary to talk so much with Lulu, she purred as if she was an understanding person, "I knew you didn't mean to. Zachary and I don't

blame you."

"Do I need your forgiveness? Who do you think you are?!" Lulu only found her laughable, and turned around, growling, "We're leaving, Irene."

Irene glanced at Zachary and sighed lengthily before dragging Ricky away with them.

"He really thinks Lulu did it, doesn't he?" Ricky exclaimed indignantly. "He doesn't deserve her if he does. Where's the trust?"

Lulu turned to glance at Ricky. "You're right."

Did he really love her if he did not even trust her this much?

"Alright, let's just head home already," Irene told them—the less Ricky talked, the better.

Things were still salvageable for now, but Ricky's rant is probably going to throw a wrench into the works. The less he ranted, the better.

Soon, they reached Spencer Mansion, and Ricky stayed downstairs while Lulu took a shower upstairs and changed into fresh clothes.

Irene was on the balcony with Tommy in her arms, sitting on the beach chair to get a little sunshine, which was not baking now that autumn had arrived.

"Mah—mah..." Tommy blabbed as he leaned on her shoulder, and Irene watched him with a tender look in her eyes.

She lifted his little hand and gave him a little kiss, when a crash echoed downstairs, followed by a shriek!

Irene quickly scooped up Tommy and rushed to the stairs, asking, "What—"

Before she could finish, she saw the carnage downstairs!

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On the floor, Ricky was lying on his back. His bath towel—which must have loosened from his waist—was just covering his privates.

Lulu was standing at the living room, a glass of water in hand as she stared impassively at him.

Sheryl was nearby as well, gaping at Ricky in shock

Irene was speechless.

What was going on here?!

Nonetheless, a resounding scream soon followed, and she had to cover Tommy's ears.

"Aaarrggghh!!!"

Ricky's fair buttocks were bare even as he held his towel against his groin as he fled. Bang!

The door was shut so loudly that Tommy jumped in surprise.

Irene stood at the stairway and looked downstairs, asking, "What happened there?"

Lulu calmly drank her glass of water before telling her.

"He came out of the shower with just a towel around his waist, and asked me for water since he saw me drinking. He wasn't watching where he was going while he drank, and knocked into the table, tripped, and fell, breaking the glass..."

Irene was at a loss for words—Lulu cared more about the glass, and not whether Ricky was hurt?

"Ricky has been kind to you. You should show some concern," Irene told her.

With Zachary married, there was no chance for Lulu to be with him now.

On the other hand, even though Ricky was younger than Lulu, he really liked her... and a relationship might not even be out of the question, and the fact that Ricky inherited his mother's good looks was a plus.

Lulu could tell that Irene was trying to get them together and really wanted to roll her eyes at her friend.

"Dream on."

Irene blinked. "What's wrong with Ricky?"

"I'm older than him, and you want me to become your sister-in-law?"

Sheryl could not help chuckling. "Age isn't an issue. All that matters is that you both like each other."

While Lulu was left speechless, Irene chimed in, "Hear, hear..."

"Quit it. Also, I'm not into him," Lulu growled. "I have to go now."

Irene headed downstairs while still carrying Tommy. "I'm just kidding. Don't get so upset."

"I'm not. Look, I'm a little worried that Ricky would catch me blushing." Lulu said. "And I still have a job, y'know."

Irene understood that, and passed Tommy to Sheryl. "I'm going to the station with Lulu."

"Okay," Sheryl replied, and Irene left with Lulu to the high speed-rail station—Lulu had booked her tickets online beforehand.

Along the way, Irene asked Lulu, "Do you hate Zachary?"

"No," Lulu replied—after they had weathered so much and still failed to stay together, it was just a sign that it was not meant to be.

As such, there was no way to beat herself over it and give herself grief.

Smiling at Irene, she said, "I'll do my best to keep on living. Don't worry."

Irene nodded, when Lulu suddenly said, “Actually, you don’t look well recently yourself, Irene. Is Isaac cheating on you?”

Irene quickly shook her head. “No... I’m just getting worn out from work.”

“Alright, but take good care of yourself. Don’t wear yourself out so much you end up looking like a granny in your thirties.” Lulu warned.

Irene rubbed her cheeks. “Do I look that bad?”

“Yup,” Lulu replied shortly.

Irene thought then that it was time she be careful, or she would hurt the child in her belly.

Her hand reached up her belly at the thought of the child—the timing of their arrival was certainly as delightful as it was worrying.

It was delightful since she might realize Isaac’s hope for a daughter, but worrying because things were strained between Isaac and herself.

“What’s wrong, Irene? Are you hungry?” Lulu asked, noticing what she was doing with her hand just then.

Irene quickly removed her hand. “Nope.”

After seeing Lulu off, Irene headed to the grocery store. It was her day off, and she wanted some fresh fruits as she took her break.

She alighted and paid the fare when she arrived, but before she headed inside, she saw Zachary’s car.

She wanted to go up and greet him, but it was Ember who alighted.

With her baseball cap and sunglasses, it was obvious she wanted to hide her face.

Irene stopped in her tracks, but decided it was nothing weird with Ember driving Zachary’s car now that they were married.

She did not want to talk to Ember, so she kept a wide berth. However, just as she was about to enter the grocery store through another doorway, she noticed that Ember was sneaking down to the basement. parking lot instead.

Irene was puzzled—did she have an unmentionable secret?

Spurred by curiosity, she quietly tailed Ember, hiding behind a pillar when she spotted Ember meeting a man!

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Irene watched as Ember passed the man a thick envelope and said, “You’d better keep your mouth shut.”

Her voice was lowered, but the threatening edge was clear.

The man was busy groping the envelope to feel its thickness and he grinned in satisfaction. "I won't breathe a word—don't worry."

Ember then looked around, pressing her cap down even though she saw no one around them. "I'm going now. Don't ever contact me."

"Of course," the man chuckled. "Still, if you want more banners hung, you can contact me. Anyone loves making easy money."

Ember did not refuse him. "Don't worry—I'll call you if there's more work to be done. The condition is that you keep your mouth shut, and money will never be a problem."

"My lips are sealed with industrial glue. Also, are you satisfied with my performance?"

Ember nodded her objective had certainly been achieved.

She was the one who hired this man to flash those banners at Central Tower just to pin the blame on Lulu.

That would drive a rift between Zachary and Lulu, while Mrs. Slate's distaste of Lulu piled up.

The outcome was certainly ideal, and she could tell from their confrontation in the morning that Mrs. Slate could not have hated Lulu more.

No one would know she was behind the banners—it was her own wedding after all,

Who would suspect the innocent bride? If anything, they would suspect Zachary's former flame.

"Alright. You know the middleman if you need a job done, right?" the man asked just then.

"Yeah," Ember replied.

After all, they even avoided phone calls and wire transfer, so that they did not leave a paper trail.

Soon, the man counted his payment as he left with a satisfied grin.

Meanwhile, Irene was stunned by the discovery that Ember was behind the banners.

That was her own wedding... but she was willing to tarnish it just to frame Lulu?

Irene felt chills at the very thought that Ember was such a schemer!

To say that one should not judge her by her appearance was an understatement—her naive, doll-like appearance was utterly deceiving!

She thought to herself then that if she ever encountered Ember again, she was going to keep an extra eye on Ember.

Taking a moment to calm herself, she returned to the grocery store and bought a truckload of groceries.

When she returned to Spencer Mansion, she alighted with a giant bag, but there was no one inside even as she carried it in.

She called Sheryl, who told her, "I'm taking a stroll with Tommy outside. We'll be right back."

"Okay," Irene replied, and hung up.

She then sorted everything, putting the cold stuff in the freezer, and allocated some for a pot of oxtail soup

She put the ingredients in a pot and let it stew with minimum heat, while she took a nap on the living room couch.

She then vaguely heard her phone ringing, and answered it.

When she heard Moneypenny's voice, she rubbed her eyes, her head quickly clearing just then. "What is it?"

"Mr. Jefferson is asking for you at the manor."

Irene frowned. They still had the gall to summon her after they basically cut ties with Isaac?

Did they forget that she was his wife?

The cheek!

"Sorry, I'm busy with work." She refused right away.

"I heard you're on leave."

Moneypenny clearly tried the hospital earlier and knew that she was not at work.

Still, the prospect that he was checking on her left her heart skipping a beat.

Feeling even more repulsed just then, she said impassively, "I'm not working because I'm sick, so I can't

"If you're sick, Mr. Jefferson can send a car and someone to help." Moneypenny appeared insistent on g

Doing it the hard way now, were they?

As such, she had to resort to name throwing.

"Whatever it is, you can take it up with Isaac," she told him.

"You are Master Isaac's wife and therefore a Jefferson. That is why you have a responsibility to be here..."

Moneypenny's words left Irene fuming—it was the worst thing that ever came out of that man's mouth!

"You insist that I am a Jefferson, but is this how you speak to your masters? If you want me to go, fine, b

With that, she hung up, and her irk had yet to subside when the doorbell rang.

Thinking that it might be Sheryl returning with Tommy, she went to answer it, but... "What are you doing

Chapter 425

James Cross said, "Mr. Jefferson sent me."

“Where is he?” Irene asked.

“He just arrived in Franconia, so he won’t be returning soon,” James replied. “I’m your protection detail in the meantime.”

Irene frowned-by all accounts, Isaac should have arrived in Franconia already. “He just arrived? Are you sure?”

James averted his eyes.

Isaac certainly should have arrived at Franconia sooner, but he had delayed his flight after receiving Mrs.

Watson’s call.

Now, he was going to need time to take another flight back to the country.

In reality, Isaac had his people keep a constant watch on his estranged family, because he knew they would not give up so easily. He told them to inform him the instant they were on the move, and they just did.

Worried that Irene would be in danger, Isaac sent James, who just happened to be staying in the country.

It was certainly fortunate he did, or there would be real trouble.

Still, to Irene, James’s evasiveness made it clear that Isaac was refusing to see her.

“If he doesn’t care enough to show up, why bother pretending to care at all? Is he even concerned if I’m alive or dead?!”

For some reason, all the pent-up frustrations she had been keeping inside burst out right then.

James quickly tried to explain, “It’s a misunderstanding-”

“How is that a misunderstanding?” Irene laughed despite herself. “He knows that the Jeffersons might harass me, or even threaten me, but he still refuses to show his face! And here you are, lying for him, telling me that he just arrived and can’t return so soon? What, are you going to tell me now that he’s late because he went by car instead of plane?!”

“He was just delayed. Mr. Jefferson actually boarded the flight this morning-

“Quit it. I don’t want to hear a word. He sent you, right? Just watch the door!”

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With that, she shut the door in James’s face, and leaned against it as her tears started to flow, but stubbornly wiped them away!

James was left standing outside.

He thought about knocking, but gave up at the thought that Irene was seeing red, and directed the protection detail he brought to watch the compound of Spencer Mansion.

Soon, Irene's phone rang again-it was not Moneypenny this time, but Ian Jefferson.

"What do you want?"

"Nothing. I was just going to invite you over for a little chat."

Irene snapped right then, "Are you crazy!?"

"About that, you can ask your son and mother."

Irene tensed up right then. "What did you do?!"

"Nothing much. I just thought that I should invite them over too."

Irene's fingers clenched on her phone. "Don't you lay a finger on them."

"Sure, if you comply."

Irene's heart was pounding and her lips trembling. Forcing herself to stay calm, she told herself to stay composed or she was not going to save Sheryl and Tommy.

She opened the front door-James was still there.

"Ma'am-"

Irene put a finger on her lips and pointed at her phone, and wrote on a paper to tell James that Ian was on the other end, and that he had abducted Tommy and Sheryl.

James realized with a start and promptly directed his people to track Ian's caller ID, while Irene tried to keep Ian on the line. "I'll do anything you want. Just tell me what you want."

"Good. In ten minutes, a MPV with the license plate 90026 will arrive to give you a ride."

Irene replied, "Fine, but I must have assurance that my mother and son are fine."

Irene had barely finished when she heard a ruckus on the other end, followed by Sheryl's voice, "Irene! Don't do what they say-"

Tommy's cries can be heard too. "Mah-mah!!!"

Irene's heart skipped a beat, and her whole body trembled with apprehension... just as Tommy's cries left her heart in pieces!

Her eyes bulged as they turned red and she snarled, "You better not have hurt them, Ian Jefferson, or I'm going to kill you!"

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Ian snorted and laughed icily. "You can't even if you want to. Don't forget that I have the upper hand here."

“No, we are on equal terms right now,” Irene growled in return. “If you hurt Tommy, my mom is going to make you suffer. You can’t lay a finger on them even if you have them, and while you have leverage against me, I’m only complying because I would rather they not get hurt at all.”

Her retort only drew more laughter from Ian. “No, you’re mistaken. Isaac killed my mother, left my father a cripple, and took Light Group away from me. I have nothing, and therefore fear nothing—all I want right now is for Isaac to have a taste of losing everything too.”

Irene panicked right then—there was just no arguing against a man who had lost everything.

Since there was nothing holding him back, Ian was truly capable of anything.

And that makes him utterly terrifying.

After she hung up, Irene turned toward James and asked, “Did you get anything?”

James shook his head. “He probably expected us to track him and prepared accordingly. There’s no fix on

his position, and he knew enough to pick a time when Mr. Jefferson isn’t around.”

“Get in the mansion for now,” Irene told them. “Think of something as fast as you can.”

“What about you?” James asked.

“He told me to get in an MPV with the registration plate 90026. I’ll turn on the GPS on my phone once I get in, so that you can track me...”

“No.” James refused squarely. “That’s too dangerous, and I won’t be able to explain myself to Mr. Jefferson if anything happens to you!”

Irene held his gaze as she told him, “Ian Jefferson has Tommy, and he’s not afraid to get killed or reprisals at all. What if he hurts my mom and Tommy if I refuse him? Do you think I can bear losing them. both? And do you really think Isaac won’t blame you if we lose Tommy?!”

James was stumped, whereas Irene understood the risk—she would be in danger if she played along to Ian’s whims, but it would buy them precious time.

“Look, I’ll do my best to delay him while you look for my mother and Tommy and save them,” she said determinedly. “We don’t have a choice because he has two of my loved ones. I’d never risk my mom or Tommy’s safety, so just do what I say.”

James certainly had no alternatives, so she went along.

Irene put her phone on silent mode while turning on the tracker just as the MPV in question drove into Spencer Mansion’s front porch.

James and the rest of Irene’s protection detail had already hidden in the mansion, so that no one would know that she had help and would presume that she was isolated.

irene took a deep breath, strode over to the MPV, and got into it.

Inside the mansion, James divided his team between tracking Irene and searching for where Ian was holding Tommy and Sheryl.

Outside, the MPV had driven off, with Irene leaning against the window, her palms clenched and sweating.

“Where are you taking me?” she asked the driver, but he kept his eyes up front.

“Ian Jefferson sent you, right?” Irene kept trying, but her response was silence.

“Did he even tell you where you’re supposed to take me? Does he not trust you or something?”

The driver finally reacted and glanced at her through the rearview mirror. “Don’t bother. I’m not falling for anything you say.”

Irene giggled. “You’re so smart.”

The chauffeur rolled his eyes—was she trying to flatter him like he was a kid? Did he look like a kid to her?

Soon, the car stopped beside the road, but it was not exactly isolated.

Still, she got off since the driver told her to do so and drove off. She stood there for a while and two men soon approached her!

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Neither of the two men spoke, and they started to search her.

Irene moved out of their reach. “What do you think you’re doing?”

Both men leered at her pretty face, unfriendly ideas occurring to them right then. “Searching for trackers.”

Irene shook her head right then. “I don’t have anything of the sort.”

“That’s not up to you to decide, we’ll only believe you after we search you and find nothing,” they said, though they seemed eager to cop a feel while they did.

Irene kept backing away. “I said I don’t have anything of the sort—”

“You should listen if you want your mother and baby to be safe from harm,” another voice said just then.

Irene turned to find Ian looking at her in amusement from within a silver sedan, having wound down his window.

She was left clenching her fist at his threat, but had to stay calm in appearance.

“I promise you that I didn’t bring any trackers, and aren’t I your relative? Having men grope my body will be an insult to you and your family. And are you sure they won’t run around telling everyone that they molested Ian Jefferson’s cousin-in-law?”

Ian's expression changed slightly but said, "You're Isaac's wife. He's going to be humiliated, not me."

"We're all Jeffersons. Don't you think you'd get caught in it?" Irene countered.

"Get over here." Ian suddenly beckoned.

Irene hesitated for a moment, but did so eventually—she had no choice anyway.

As she stood by his car, Ian studied her from head to toe, and said casually, "Not bad. I guess that's why Isaac cares so much about you."

Opening the door, he said, "Get in."

Irene refused. "Where do you think you are taking me?"

"Did you think this is over already?" Ian laughed. "I spent so much time coming up with an elaborate plan for this very day, and you expect me to let you off already?"

"Fine, I'll come with you, but my mother and child—"

"Get in. Anything else can wait—patience is a virtue." Ian grinned.

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Irene's face fell. His malice was almost tangible, but she got into his car anyway—she had to, for the sake

of her child and mother.

After she got in, however, Ian extended a hand and said, "You don't have a tracker, but your phone has a tracking function, right? Give it to me."

Irene started to protest. "I don't—"

"Do you want me to search you? I wouldn't mind, though you can't complain when I touch you where you don't like..."

"Here." Irene simply threw her phone at him, knowing that he was either going to resort to force or some

humiliating way to make her give it up.

Having no choice, she would rather do it herself than be humiliated.

Ian held up her phone, but did not break it or throw it away. He was not surprised when he turned on the screen and saw that the tracking function was turned on either, as if he had expected that from the start. He simply handed it to one of the two men outside and said, "Take this and keep heading south."

"Yes, sir," the man said and left with Irene's phone.

Turning back to Irene, Ian asked, "I wonder if the person tracking you would realize that?"

Irene could only pray that James did, even as Ian kept laughing, "I knew it—everything goes smoothly for me once Isaac is gone. All my patience for this moment was worth it."

He had certainly waited for Isaac to leave before making his move, and it paid off in spades.

No matter how competent Isaac's lap dogs were, they only amounted to that much without him around. "Drive," he told his chauffeur.

"You already have me," Irene said then. "I won't run away. Can you release my mother and child already?" "When did I ever say I was going to do that?" Ian asked in return.

Irene bellowed, "You're a liar!"

"So what if I am? What can you do about it? Hmm?" Ian asked smugly.

Irene leveled her eyes squarely on Ian's right temple even as her hand balled into a fist.

She then moved so quickly Ian did not even have time to react!

"What-"

Ian felt something pressing against his skin!

Chapter 428

What was that?

Ian frowned—it felt sharp as it dug into his skin.

Irene was glaring at him calmly. "A little push, and you will be in a world of pain."

The temple is a vital spot for humans as it is a node where various nerves are connected, and any trauma leaves the victim vulnerable to injury..

Irene did not have time to prepare when she came and could not bring anything lethal. All she had was the key she grabbed from a table—but even if she could not kill Ian, she could threaten him.

Ian, however, did not think that she would hurt him. "Don't forget that I have your mother and child. Hurt me, and they die."

"Take me to them," Irene demanded. "And I promise I won't hurt you."

"No." Ian stared at her sideways. "But if you hurt me, they die."

To no surprise, she did not dare to get rough with him—not when her baby had not been rescued.

Taking her hand off himself, he chuckled when he finally saw what she was holding. "A key? You threatened me with that?"

Irene held his gaze, and repeated, "You have me already. Let them go."

"No. I. Won't." He breathed—it was his leverage against her and Isaac. He would die before he spared them.

Furious, Irene lunged at him again, ready to go down with him!

This time, however, Ian easily caught her wrist. "Now, now. You shouldn't glare at me like that, or blame me at all. Blame myself for being the idiot who fell for Isaac Jefferson, and got caught in my line of fire." The car stopped beside a riverside dock. Weeds had grown all over the path leading to it, cutting off all access.

Ian whipped out his phone, saying, "Isaac should have returned to town by now, don't you think?" He dialed Isaac's number, and it was answered soon enough!

Isaac had taken a private jet on the trip back to Cloud City instead of an airliner, and his plane had just landed when he received Ian's call.

"I have your wife, your son, and your mother-in-law. Give me Remy if you want to save them."

Ian had actually found out about Remy, and was stunned when he found out—to think that Isaac had already laid out his exit plan years ago.

Though he must concede that Isaac had vision and the will to act, most of Remy's assets were Light Group's, and he would take them all back!

Naturally, he had been lying to Irene when he told her that he did not care—his mother's one wish was that he lived level, arid to stand atop of Light Group. That was why he would take back what was rightfully his so that his mother's soul could find solace!

Isaac's response, however, was ice cold.

"I can have any woman I want, and they'd be falling over themselves to bear me children... As for a mother-in-law, do you think I care?"

Ian was actually stunned by his indifference.

He knew that Isaac could be ruthless, but not this ruthless!

Still, he turned on his phone's speaker so that Irene could hear, and said, "I know you're lying. You care about Irene Spencer, or you wouldn't have kept her around you for so long."

Meanwhile, Isaac had gotten into a car that was heading straight to Spencer Mansion.

His expression was cool, and there was a sharp glare in his eyes.

As he loosened his collar, he remained perfectly aware that the more he cared about Irene, the more Ian would threaten him with her safety.

Hence, he feigned nonchalance and laughed. "You're really behind the times, aren't you?"

"What are you talking about?" Ian was convinced he knew everything there is to know about Isaac, from the people he cared about to all his vital personnel.

"Did you even know that Irene Spencer and I split up already?"

Ian did not believe him. "Trying to trick me? Did you think I'm that stupid?"

Sk around if you don't believe me. She killed my mother, y'know—did you think I can love my mother's

murderer?"

Ian saw the brief flinch in Irene's eyes.

He actually did hear about Yvaine Lynd, and had been astonished for a while when he found out that his aunt was alive... only to die for some reason afterwards.

And it turned out that Irene had killed her?!

Chapter 429

Moreover, Isaac had definitely spent most of his recent time abroad, and Ian did hear rumors that his relationship with Irene was strained-though there was just no solid evidence to prove it.

But the rumors turned out to be true?

"I don't believe you," Ian growled-he was not about to buy it that easily.

That was when Isaac hung up on him.

It actually left Ian wondering just then... that reaction certainly points to a rift between Isaac and Irene.

But could it just be Isaac trying to deceive him?

Ian was actually stumped.

Turning towards Irene, he asked, "You two got in a fight?"

For her part, Irene knew that Isaac was hung up over Yvaine's death and even understood it.

Even so, her heart broke to hear him suggest that he would never love his mother's murderer.

It was pure anguish.

Nonetheless, she worked hard to control her emotions. "You know already, don't you? Why do you even ask?"

Ian was watching her, and knew that the way she was withholding her pain was no pretense.

Even so, Isaac was cunning, and Irene proved that she was not that stupid.

Who knew if they were both together in the act?

After losing to Isaac so many times, Ian could not afford to lose again.

As such, he decided to keep her firmly under his control even if Isaac seemed not to care about her.

When Ian decided to call Isaac again, Isaac had already rendezvoused with James, who was still tracking Irene's phone all the way south.

Isaac narrowed his eyes, and told Stan Hill to bring up a map.

Further up north was a bustling part of the city, along with its administrative zone-not the place where one would commit a crime.

“Is there a problem? My boys have managed to track down the vehicle...”

Isaac gave him a look and asked, “You think this is normal?”

James looked at the map again, and turned silent for several seconds. “Well, no, but-”

“But, what?” Stan cut him short. “She could very well have been parted from her phone!”

James had certainly been too worried to notice the discrepancy in details.

Now that he thought about it, it was weird that he managed to track down those perps so smoothly.

Ian had also been prepared for everything, and would definitely have thought of the possibility that Irene brought a phone.

“Have your boys take down the people they’re following, and we’ll know what’s going on,” Stan said.

1/2

James quickly sent the word to his boys.

Bzzt-

Isaac’s phone rang just then, and he glanced at the screen-it was Ian’s number.

Stan said, “Don’t.”

They had yet to find where Ian’s goons were keeping Tommy, and Ian himself was holding Irene hostage- they would just play to his tune if they answered his call.

It was better to leave him hanging, and see what hand he would play.

Isaac, however, shot Stan a cold look and answered it anyway.

After all, what if Ian got desperate and killed all his hostages?

Even if he knew that he would lose any right to bargain, he had to take it-no one could stay calm when their loved one was threatened.

Now that Yvaine was truly gone, Irene and Tommy were his only family.

He would not allow any harm to come to them.

Naturally, he would not let that show, and answered the phone coolly, “I thought I made myself very clear. What, don’t you get what I’m saying, or do you not have the capacity to verify rumors now?”

Isaac’s last part was an especially painful ridicule, and Ian bristled like someone stepped on his tail.

How could he not be furious?

“You have one hour. Give me Remy, or I’ll cut Irene into pieces to feed the fishes,” Ian growled, and quickly hung up.

Turning to Irene, he asked, “Do you think he’d give up Remy for you?”

“Dream on,” Irene replied icily. “I’m not worth that much.”

“Actually, I think he’ll show up,” Ian said, fury still showing in his face even as he leaned against his chair. “I know him—even if he feels nothing toward you, you’re still his, and he’ll do all he can to save you, if only to save face.”

It would have been better if he left that unsaid.

Irene was scowling further after he did—Isaac would save her just to save face?

“You’re wrong. He won’t do anything so impractical when he has so little to gain. You really should give up already.”

Ian suddenly chuckled. “Why don’t we make a bet?”

“What?” Irene stared at him warily.

Chapter 430

Ian said, “Let’s bet if Isaac is going to come to bail you out. I’ll release you, your mother, and your child if you win, and you’re mine if you lose.”

It was not as if he was actually interested in Irene—he just wanted to possess her because she was once Isaac’s.

If she really became his, it would be a slap in the face for Isaac.

It would be sheer infamy!

Naturally, Irene was not going to play along. “You’re a nutjob!”

Ian’s face fell and he grabbed her by the chin. “I hate it when people badmouth me!”

Even so, Irene met his sinister gaze without flinching. “You kidnapped women and a baby for this? Even if you win, you’re still a loser. Also, I’d rather die than suffer the likes of you.”

Ian’s eyes turned scarlet right then. “So this is why Isaac keeps you around... You have heart.”

A woman who had none would already be crying a river now—it seems that Isaac did not fall for her beauty.

He was almost impressed!

“Well, let’s see how long you can keep barking,” he growled as he shoved her. “Get out of the car.”

Irene was just thinking that she wanted to get away from Ian.

Even though her chin was red from his grip, she endured it without complaint—she would not give him the satisfaction.

As she stood beside the car and a breeze ruffled her hair, she soon gaped in horror as Ian took out an explosive vest from the car trunk and walked up to her.

“What are you doing?!”

Seeing the fear in her eyes left Ian in a good mood, and he 'patiently' explained, "It took me some effort to get my hands on this. See here? It's attached with as many explosives as possible, and this is the detonator. Do you know who usually uses these?"

Irene, however, was backing away-she had no interest in what Ian was saying, and all she wanted was to stay away from that thing.

Ian simply gestured for his goons to restrain her and continued his lecture. "This thing is called an explosive vest. Again, do you know who usually uses these?"

Irene's face was contorted in rage-she really wanted to spit in his face.

Ian ignored her reaction and simply continued, "It's terrorists. They put this on and blow themselves up with the people they want dead. So, put it on-it would definitely look good on you."

As he walked up to Irene with the explosive vest, the two burly men restraining her held her in place, preventing any resistance.

She was not going to get out of this even if she could move anyway.

Ian then put the explosive vest on her, while he took the detonator, smiling darkly. "One gentle push, and boom... You're in pieces."

He then sighed. "It's your fault for refusing me. I have to control you like this now."

His phone began to ring then, and he answered it with threat and authority, "You'd better come alone, or Irene will rest in pieces!"

He then put it away and laughed smugly in Irene's face. "It seems that he still cares about you."

Irene merely glared at him in silence, while Ian continued, "The more he cares, the further I control him... Not only would I make him surrender Remy, but I'll avenge my mother too."

Irene clenched her hands. She did not want Isaac to come-he would lose because Ian was clearly prepared.

All she dared hope for was for him to save Tommy and Sheryl.

And yet, a huge black SUV drove up to them, stopping by the road.

The door soon opened and a towering figure alighted!